

Rules and Procedures Committee

31st Representative Town Meeting

Town of Groton, Connecticut

Date: March 14, 2018 at 7pm

Location: Groton Senior Center, Classroom B

Members: Committee Chairperson Kate Richards and Reps. Jordan Brayman, Karin Adams, Douglas Monaghan, Irma Streeter, Michael Whitehouse

Members Present: Reps. Kate Richards, Karin Adams, Douglas Monaghan, Irma Streeter, and Michael Whitehouse (caucus of 5/6 members)

Members Absent: Rep. Jordan Brayman

Also in Attendance: Rep. Roseanne Kotowski, Rep. Syma Ebbin, Rep. Beverly Washington

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm

Referral #1 from Rep. Kotowski - Referral items to the RTM without time for consideration by a Committee may not entertain a motion to move the question during debate.

Discussion of #1: Rep. Kotowski explained her reasoning to be that in a previous RTM meeting where rules were suspended an item was voted on before it had gone to committee and before all representatives who wished to speak could because there was a motion to move the question. Rep. Monaghan pointed out that there are current rules that allow the moderator to continue debate after the question has been moved if debate has not exceeded 10 minutes and RTM Rules state that the normal procedure is to go through committee. Rep. Ebbin discussed the instance brought up by Rep. Kotowski and stated that there had been several hands up to debate when the motion was made to move the question and it had been more than 10 minutes of debate at that point. All members discussed the meaning of Rule 7.3 and whether or not the Moderator could refuse to move the question after it was motioned and 10 minutes of debate had gone by, to which the consensus was that the rule does not allow for refusal after that point. Rep. Streeter brought up that the rules currently state that to move the question requires a vote, to which Rep. Adams commented that sometimes it fails and debate continues because enough members wish to continue debate. Rep. Richards pointed out measures are already in place to ensure members have enough debate before a vote, including that to move the question requires a 2/3 vote which is a high threshold and would show that most members are ready to vote on the question. Rep. Whitehouse suggested an amendment to the referral with some stipulation that would cap the debate so that a few members could not speak indefinitely. Discussion was also made by all about the rarity of suspending the rules and voting on an item before it goes to committee.

After discussion, Rep. Kotowski requested to replace the original referral with a change to RTM Rules & Procedures 7.3 after the original text to add "or 20 minutes if the item has not been through an RTM

committee.” Further discussion of this amendment included the difference another 10 minutes of debate might or might not make, the time it took to take the roll call votes for motions to move the question, and the current rules about committee referrals and motions. All committee members agreed they were ready to vote on the referral. The amended text of the referral voted on was:

Change RTM Rules & Procedures 7.3 Moving the Question to read “The Moderator may refuse to accept a motion to move the question for ten (10) minutes after the motion on the floor is made if debate is desired by any member of the RTM or twenty (20) minutes if the item has not been through an RTM committee”.

Vote by show of hands:

In Favor – Rep. Whitehouse (1)

Against Rep. Adams, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Monaghan, Rep. Richards (4)

Abstentions (0)

The committee does not recommend to make this change to the RTM Rules & Procedures.

Referral #2 from Rep. Kotowski - RTM Committee meetings shall not be held before a regular or special RTM meeting.

Discussion of #2: Rep. Kotowski explained that this referral is regarding the previous Finance Committee meeting on 1/10/18 because the minutes presented in the following RTM meeting were more brief than than the ones submitted after the meeting distributed to RTM members. Rep. Streeter stated that committee meeting minutes only need to be a statement of the actions taken, not a detail of all discussion that took place. Rep. Richards said as written the referral is too vague because it doesn’t say how long before the RTM meeting a committee meeting should be prohibited. Rep. Richards also said she was very hesitant to create a rule that takes away the option for committee meetings to occur right before an RTM meeting because at times there is a need with an important issue is referred the RTM with little notice and a delay could have unwanted consequences. There was a general discussion about the notice required for meetings and the current rules for referrals. Rep. Monaghan said that there already exist rules to make sure committee meetings function in a transparent way. Rep. Richards noted that when committee minutes are reported to the RTM there is also a time for discussion and any committee members or other RTM members can comment or ask questions to make sure all relevant information is shared. It was also discussed that committee meetings are not usually held just before a RTM meeting and we, as RTM members, can agree to schedule them on other days as a norm and only schedule them for the same day when needed. All members agreed they were prepared to vote.

Vote on Referral #2 by a show of hands:

In favor - None (0)

Against - Unanimous (5)

Abstentions - None (0)

Referral #3 from Rep. Kotowski - Move the start time for regular RTM Meetings at 7:00pm.

Discussion of #3: Rep. Kotowski explained that the RTM Meetings can sometimes go later than 10:30pm and since some people need to get up for work in the morning it would be helpful to start earlier. All members discussed the implication that caucuses would then need to be moved up too, starting at 6:30pm, and that this change might be wanted by some members and not by others. After some comments about personal preferences it was agreed that this question should go to the full RTM. Rep. Whitehouse suggested that instead of the committee voting for or against the time change as all agreed it should be up to the majority of the RTM, the committee neutrally send it to the RTM vote without a vote from the Rules & Procedures Committee. All members were in agreement to Rep. Whitehouse's suggestion and so we recommend a vote by the RTM.

Motion to adjourn/second: Rep. Monaghan/Rep. Adams

Meeting adjourned at 7:54pm.

Meeting minutes/report prepared by Rep. Kate Richards